

## ***Slavery - living under the curse***

*Read Exodus 1:8-14*

Joseph had been a blessing to Egypt, and his family were invited to come to Egypt in order to receive a share of that blessing, but now their status had moved from being blessed to living under a curse; forced into increasingly harsh slavery.

This is not the right place for anyone to have to inhabit, least of all the people of God!

And yet, we too allow circumstances, situations, relationships and even ourselves to force us into the curse of slavery, unable to share the glorious liberty for which the people of God were created.

*Take a chunk of the modelling clay. Knead it in your hands and form its shape into a brick. Perhaps that is an activity your fingers are unused to, and they feel tired and stiff from forcing the clay into shape.*

As you knead and brick ponder what the things are which shape you and force you into a life less than that for which you were made.

You may wish to write a word on one side of the brick as a reminder of the things which enslave us.

Hold the brick with your word carved into it before God in the quiet.

*Place the brick to one side and then come back and pick it up later to take home. It should dry and harden in a couple of days as a reminder of “your time in slavery”.*

## ***The burning bush - meeting God afresh (i)***

*Read Exodus 3:1-5*

Ahead of you is a bush. But, your attention is caught by the fact that it is burning, but not being consumed.

You instinctively want to approach closer, but as you do so your hear your name being spoken.

Do you hear a booming voice or is it a whisper?

Is your name spoken angrily, or lovingly?

Is it a voice like one which speaks your name often, or is this the first time you have heard it?

*Before you approach any closer you are to remove your shoes - this is holy ground.*

But, perhaps the idea of such holiness is intimidating. You may wish to keep your shoes on and avoid getting any closer - at least for the present.

## ***The burning bush - meeting God afresh (ii)***

*Read Exodus 3:6-12*

This is the moment when God rekindles His relationship with His people, where He begins to respond to their cry of pain and anguish.

What do you know of the God who is speaking to you out of the burning bush?

Is He the God of your ancestors? Or is He the friend and companion who has walked beside you for many years?

Either way, there will be things (as in any relationship) where familiarity allows forgetfulness...

What have you forgotten about God over time?

What do you need to relearn as you walk the wilderness?

Perhaps once you could honestly have said 'for me to live is Christ, to die is gain' but probably not now with all your concerns and responsibilities.

Perhaps the joy and excitement of the voyage of discovery of this amazing God has receded - the battering of the years has forced you into a shell.

Pray and ponder over this. There may be something - a word or a memory - to write on the tag.

*Tie the tag onto the bush before, carefully, moving away.*

*Don't forget your shoes!*

## ***Passover - getting ready to follow***

On the table are some foods; lamb and herbs - a selection of the items from the Seder Meal.

*Read Exodus 12:21-28*

*Remain standing and taste;*

*the lamb of the Passover is the sacrifice for redemption*

*the bitter herbs are a reminder of the hardship of slavery*

*after you have eaten, join the rest of the people of Israel as they knelt and worshipped the God who rescues.*

What words would you use to worship this God. What has He rescued you from which is to be the reason for your worship in this moment?

*Read Exodus 12:37-42*

## ***Tired of the wilderness - looking back to Egypt***

*Read Exodus 17:1-7*

The people were tiring of the hardships which would shape them into God's people, and started to look back on their time of slavery.

There are some samples of salty water like that found in the wells. In the Seder meal, the salt water is also a reminder of the tears shed in Egypt when the people were longing to be rescued, a time now forgotten in the desert.  
*Have a taste of the water - it isn't very pleasant.*

Exodus 17:3 'But the people were thirsty and continued to complain to Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt? To kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?"'

Look who the people blamed for their situation.

What are the things which trigger you to complain? Who do you blame? Are there hardships you have been or are currently going through about which you want to complain, but perhaps might be being used by God to shape you?

Romans 8:28 ' We know that in all things God works for good with those who love Him, those whom He has called according to His purpose.'

Do you need discernment, patience, courage, endurance? Remain in the present with God until you know what to pray for - and ask Him who provides all good things...

## ***At the mountain - learning to be obedient***

*Read Exodus 19:9-25*

The people were expected to wash and prepare themselves. God's presence is not to be taken lightly or for granted.

*Use the water in the bowl to wash your hands.*

As you do so think over the reading. Even the Priests were unable to approach without care. We are a Royal Priesthood!

Perhaps there are things you might visualise washing away. Guilt can be a powerful force, but rarely for good unless it is transformed by the loving God into a desire to be changed.

What needs to be washed away, or what commitment needs to be made for an act of putting right before you can be fully ready to approach?

Wash it away in preparation...

*Carefully dry your hands on the towel.*

## ***Looking to the Promised Land - seeing the blessing to come***

*If you like looking at maps then look at one of the maps in front of you.*

Can you trace places you have been? Can you find places you haven't been - if you understand maps, can you visualise the terrain from the colours and symbols?

What feature in the landscape interest you and make you want to go and explore further?

*Read Deuteronomy 34:1-12*

Time and hardship in the wilderness have been used by God to shape His people. The Promised Land is where they will live and be blessed (even if we know they will also go astray in the years to come).

Can you imagine where God is leading us as a Church Family? What blessing has been promised to you or us?

What do you long to see in this future? *Using the Post-its perhaps you could make a note and place it on the map somewhere.*